

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

Winter plans for students on A BUDGET


FARHEEN RAHMAN

Winter in Bangladesh arrives bearing a deal. For one, cool air, hearty warm food, and more motivation to have fun. On the flip side, the academic reality threatens to return in full force. Students experience this shift acutely with inviting rooftops, early morning shenanigans, and the city feeling like it's waiting to be discovered. The best part? You don't have to spend a lot to celebrate, as the most beautiful winter experiences are often simple and cheap.

Rooftop BBQs

A BBQ on the balcony or rooftop is an oldie, but a goodie. There's no need to spend a lot on ingredients; everything from chickens to spices can be bought fresh and cheap at local markets. Not owning a grill is not the worst thing in the world. Just stack some bricks to form an oven and use a piece of foil or a wire rack to arrange a cooking setup. A homemade marinade with mustard oil, chilli, garlic, salt, pepper, and a bit of lemon can taste much fresher than store-bought mixes.

An electric fan is ideal for stoking flames, but a hand fan works well too. Fairy lights, if you have them, can enhance the charms of winter darkness, along with a small speaker. If all else fails, the half-dreadful, half-charming performances by your songbird friends will always liven things up.

Cycling

Winter mornings are ideal for cycling and for people who enjoy the enchantments of early hours. Roads are quieter and cleaner during winter mornings. Riding with friends is both exercise and therapy, and there's no feeling like cycling down the foggy streets. At the end of the session,

maybe drop into a roadside stall for breakfast, and gossip while sipping on steaming cups of tea. Winter mornings will transform these modest pleasures into enthralling memories.

Cosy movie nights

If you can't be bothered to go out, winter is the perfect time for hosting movie nights. Theatres are impersonal and lack festivity. A white bedsheet tacked to a wall makes a good makeshift screen. A laptop or TV works well in the absence of a projector, but you can always recreate the theatre atmosphere by renting out projectors from social media for the low price of one VIP ticket.

Once the stage is set, make your own popcorn, and grab all the snacks the theatres stop you from taking. Get comfortable, and feel free to be loud since you're not bound by social customs. This is your theatre, and you play by your rules.

Welfare projects

Winter is also the season of compassion. Some take this period to volunteer or fundraise for charities. Gathering warm clothes, organising low-cost meals, or distributing blankets – every little bit helps. You can plan and advertise digitally, and start from your personal space to get your initiative to flourish, and engage other interested people. These meaningful actions keep you grounded and remind you that warmth is meant to be shared.

Winter gardening

If you prefer something calmer and homelier, try gardening. Cooler temperatures make it more manageable to grow a variety of herbs and vegetables. In little pots on balconies

or windowsills, most winter plants, like coriander, mint, or tomatoes, flourish with minimum fuss. There's a sense of fulfilment in watching a seed you planted grow, and being able to brag about your urban farming journey doesn't hurt.

Exploring new hobbies

Winter is the hobby season. Cooking feels better when it's cold outside, and crocheting feels more cuddled-in. Photography is irresistible with winter's foggy mornings and soft sunlight. You don't need fancy equipment to start, just curiosity and a willingness to try something new. Cooking a familiar bowl of soup, or a blurry picture of winter mist, can feel unexpectedly nourishing.

Games and sports

If you want light-hearted group activities, badminton and board games are your wintertime essentials. Playing badminton in the cold is energising; even missing every other shot is bound to incite laughter. Call your friends over for tea and a game of Ludo, UNO, or carrom. The heat from teacups radiating through your palms, the razzmatazz of debates, and spilling the verbal sort of tea – there's an intimate sense of warmth that's distinctly winter.

Winter doesn't need big plans or great journeys. The little things, like warm food, cool air, giddy laughter, and moments that don't cost much, mean everything. So, grab some friends and create joy from every angle winter can offer, and let this season warm you in its own magical way.

Farheen Rahman is an IR student who researches contemporary crises faster than she handles her own. Reach her at: farheen.subah@gmail.com.